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ABSTRACT

R. L. Selman, in his model of friendship conceptions (1984) distinguished 5 stages of these conceptions, relating to qualitative changes in sociocognitive development. In his model, specific differentiations relating to sociodemographic, gender-specific, and cultural factors are not foreseen. To investigate the significance of social and cultural factors in this context, a comparison of persons from West and East Germany (FRG and GDR) seemed promising. In this case a common cultural background and a common language were a given, an important element, because in cross-cultural studies linguistic nuances can easily be lost in translation and varying semantic contexts can be evoked. This paper describes the investigations into social difference that affect ideas about friendship among adolescents and adults. The paper explains that the study involved interviews with 108 persons (44 adolescents and 64 adults) in Berlin; the adults were mostly university students, while the adolescents were mostly high school students. It states that the comparability of the groups with respect to key traits was given, and that the interviews were transcribed then coded and analyzed with the aid of the text analysis system MAX (Kruckartz, 1992). According to the paper, results revealed considerable differences regarding the function of friendship and to key conceptions of interpersonal relationships (related to concepts such as trust, politeness, honesty/openness, fidelity, and conflict) between East and West Berliners shortly after reunification, and also revealed considerable differences between adolescents and adults. (Contains a 28-item bibliography.) (NKA)

Social Support versus Self-Realization: Friendship
Conceptions of Adolescents and Adults in an
East-West Comparison.

by Renate Valtin

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Renate Valtin

Social Support versus Self-Realization:

Friendship Conceptions of Adolescents and Adults in an East-West Comparison

What children, adolescents and adults think about friendship has previously been investigated largely in terms of Selman's model of friendship conceptions. Selman (1984) distinguished five stages of these conceptions, relating to qualitative changes in sociocognitive development. To his mind, the impetus behind this development lay in the ability to distinguish and coordinate social perspectives.

As this implies, Selman's model is very strongly orientated to the structural theory of cognition. On the one hand, it takes too little account of the actual social experiences which can influence conceptions of friendship (although these might be introduced on an interactionalistic basis); on the other, it does not sufficiently focus on the affective components that are so important to friendships (see Wagner 1991). Selman's findings, especially as regards children aged 5 to 12, were replicated on the basis of German samples by Keller/Wood (1987) and Valtin (1991), whereby only slight differences, explicable in terms of differing social experience, were observed. At the later stages 3 and 4, when general cognitive preconditions for perspective coordination are given, we can expect to see stronger individual differences, traceable above all to differing social experiences. In Selman's model, specific differentiations relating to sociodemographic, gender-specific and cultural factors are not foreseen. This may be due to the very small samples studied, as well as to their homogeneous cultural background (white, presumably middle-class American).

To investigate the significance of social and cultural factors in this context, a comparison of persons from West and East Germany (FRG and GDR) seemed promising. In this case a common cultural background and a common language were given. This was very important, because in cross-cultural studies linguistic nuances can easily be lost in translation and varying semantic contexts can be evoked. Yet the presence of such linguistic differences could not be excluded even between East and West Germany, since their citizens do in fact associate different connotations and even denotations with certain words as a result of the greatly differing social and political systems under which they were acculturated.

The following paper describes our investigations into social differences that affect ideas about friendship among adolescents and adults. The theoretical framework was provided by an interactionistic, structural-theoretical approach in which conceptions of friendship were interpreted as subjective means, dependent on the developmental level of social cognition, of coming to terms with socialization experiences. With regard to the question

of what such experiences could be significant in the formation of friendships, the sociohistorical considerations of Tenbruck (1964) and Beck/Beck-Gernsheim (1990) proved helpful. According to these authors, the loss of traditional ties and orientation patterns, increasing secularization and the pluralization of life worlds are individually experienced as a profound loss of inward stability and an emotional and social homelessness. This lack of binding life and identity patterns leads to orientational insecurity and a greater need for person-related stability, which is sought in intimate social relationships such as friendship or love. And since marriage and family ties have become increasingly relaxed, even fragile, the need for reliable relations of friendship might be expected to be especially strong. Whether this is equally true of persons from different social systems, however, is something that has yet to be investigated in depth. Tenbruck, for his part, assumes that in highly differentiated societies in which a multiplicity of role offers leads to personal orientational insecurity, individuals could be expected to feel a great need for friendship to confirm and stabilize their personalities, and that such friendships would be characterized by a high degree of emotionalization and intimacy. A comparison of friendship conceptions held by persons from the FRG and GDR seemed well suited to empirically testing such considerations, since we were dealing here with two different social systems. On the one hand we had a democracy with pluralistic values, a capitalist economy, a consumer society providing great liberties but also considerable sources of insecurity for individuals, who were subject to great "individualization pressure" in so far as they were held largely responsible for shaping their own biographies, from education and training to choosing a job, advancing their career, and shaping their private and family lives. On the other, we had a society with the unified ideology of "democratic centralism," a socialist system, and an economy of dearth characterized by strong bureaucratic control with respect to schooling and career, and by a limitation of individual rights, yet which at the same time rewarded conformity with a high degree of social security. By comparison to the West German society of risk, in East Germany every biographically significant aspect of life planning (occupation and career advancement, founding a family, place and type of residence) was subject to governmental control and regimentation. Yet thanks to socialist welfare from cradle to grave, individuals enjoyed a high degree of social security as well. Also, the family held a place of prominence, being considered "a community of need and a bastion of refuge in face of the unreasonable demands of ubiquitous government regimentation, harassment and control" (Wensierski 1994, p. 48).

In addition to these macrostructural factors (differing social structures, heterogeneous forms of living and division of labor), further socialization factors could be expected to have an influence on conceptions of friendship. These included social norms relating to interpersonal relationships, e.g., value systems and educational aims in family and school.

In this regard, too, considerable differences between the FRG and GDR have been found (Sturzbacher/Kalb 1993). An exception was gender-related role expectations and stereotypes, which were apparently quite similar in both societies (Trappe 1995, Dölling 1993, Nickel 1992, Pfister/Voigt 1982). In sum, a comparison of the differing social conditions suggested the existence of differing conceptions of friendship and interpersonal relations, as well as of gender-specific differences within each system.

The present article is concerned with differences in the ideas of friendship held by adolescents and adults from West and East Berlin, who were interviewed shortly after reunification. A detailed discussion of the theoretical approach, methodology, and results as regards the adult sample, including a gender comparison, may be found in Valtin/Fatke (1997). The present paper summarizes a portion of the findings discussed in that book and also includes an evaluation of the interviews conducted with adolescents.

Questions Asked in the Study

Our study, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, or German Research Association, involved interviews with 108 persons in Berlin. The questions asked were the following: How do people develop friendships? What ideas do they have with respect to the following aspects of friendly relations: The motives behind making friends, the way friendship emerges, notions of an ideal friend, politeness and trust in friendship, disputes and conflict solution between friends, reasons why a friendship can end. And finally, what (reciprocal) relationships play a role in friendship and love? In evaluating our data we focussed, among other factors, on differences between persons from the western and eastern (formerly GDR) parts of Berlin. Since the interviews took place a relatively short time after the borders were opened (in 1991), we could expect that the interviewees' notions of friendship would not be strongly influenced by the social and political changes brought about by the political transition that has become known as the *Wende*.

Sample and Method

The sample comprised a total of 108 persons, 44 adolescents and 64 adults, half each female and male, from the western and eastern districts of Berlin. The adults were university students and white-collar employees aged 20 to 50 years; the adolescents were principally high school students, plus a few apprentices (trainees), all 16 to 18 years of age. The comparability of the groups with respect to key traits was given. Still, the subgroups could naturally not be considered representative. In the adult sample, academically educated persons dominated, the majority of them active in education or the social sciences. In other words, this group could be expected to have dealt with issues of social relationships in the course of their academic career or professional activity, and, by

comparison to the general population, to possess more highly developed social reflection skills.

As a method we chose the individual interview, based on guidelines partially derived from Selman (1984). As a rule interviews took place in the interviewee's residence and lasted an hour to an hour and a half. As regards the status of the interview statements, it should be remarked that they likely represented replies influenced by social desirability. This, however, could be considered an advantage, because it meant that the replies probably contained cultural interpretations which would contribute to accentuating precisely those group-specific differences we intended to study.

As far as the validity of the study results is concerned, it should be emphasized that the comparison of male and female interviewees revealed numerous differences as regards number and gender of friends as well as the quality and meaning of friendship, differences which basically conformed with the findings reported in the literature (see Rubin 1985, Auhagen/v. Salisch 1993, etc.). From this we may conclude that our sample, although not representatively composed, engendered no significant distortions of findings, and also that the statements on east-west differences could justifiably be generalized.

The interviews were transcribed, then coded and analyzed with the aid of the text analysis system MAX (Kuckartz 1992). The coding was completed by two independent raters. The interrater consistency amounted to a satisfactory 91%.

Findings

In representing our findings, as a rule adolescents and adults were viewed together. Yet it should be pointed out that considerable differences did exist between the two groups. The adolescents' statements were considerably more consistent and evinced less differentiated concepts than the adults'. Still, differences with respect to background and above all gender did appear, and these were even more marked among the adults. To give readers a well-rounded picture of our findings, we shall occasionally refer to the significant gender differences observed.

Number and Gender of Friends

The interview began with the question, "Do you have a best friend, male or female (*Freund beziehungsweise Freundin*)?" with the emphasis on the adjective *best*. If the reply was negative, we inquired about friends in general and additionally asked about the gender of these friends. Four patterns of friendship emerged from the replies:

- (1) A best friendship with only one or two persons of the same sex (which applied to more than a third of the interviewees);

- (2) friendship with several persons of the same sex (mentioned by about one third of the sample, yet more frequently by females);
- (3) friendship with several persons of both sexes (mentioned more frequently by males). Adolescents tended to refer to members of their clique, which male East Berlin teenagers called their *Kumpels*, or buddies;
- (4) a close friendship between male and female persons, which, however, appeared to be the exception. This constellation occurred among our interviewees only in the form of a friendship with another couple or with a former love partner.

As an analysis of the interviews showed, the number of friends frequently permitted conclusions to be drawn with regard to the quality of friendship (see also Matthews 1983). Especially among the adults, persons who had only one close friend of either gender tended to associate higher expectations with this relationship.

Reasons for Friendship

On the whole, a great consistency was observed in the replies to the question, "Why are you friends?" Adolescents tended to emphasize common interests and long acquaintance as reasons (the East Berlin adolescents had known almost all of their friends since kindergarten age, the West Berlin teenagers since elementary school). Adults, in addition to shared interests, tended to mention common life experiences, philosophies and attitudes. These were thought to encourage mutual understanding and trust, and to contribute to a frank exchange of views. Differences came to light only in the case of women, who placed greater emphasis on the opportunity for intimate conversation, and East Berliners, who tended to emphasize shared political convictions. Agreement in political matters, especially when not in conformance with the regime, understandably had a greater significance in the former GDR than in the pluralistic West.

Significance of Friendship

Several interview questions were designed to shed light on the meaning attached to friendship by the persons in our sample: "What are the reasons why you are friends? Why do you think it is important to have friends? What is your idea of an ideal friend? What do good friends do for each other?"

To lend a significant order to the abundant and diverse replies, they were associated with three functions of friendship. These were derived in part from the material itself and in part were based on the theoretical approaches found in the literature on friendship (Wright 1977, Kon 1979, Auhagen 1991, etc.).

The following outline contains the categories on the function of friendship finally derived after several reviews of the data. These categories permit a rough analytical differentiation, despite the fact that they may often overlap or merge in certain respects.

Functions of Friendship		
Coping with Life	Self-Realization	
Support and assistance	Interrelating and socializing	Personal development
Emotional support	Shared activities	Being able to be oneself
Practical aid	Conversations	Development and learning Security

The function most frequently mentioned by our interviewees was that of "socializing and interrelating". They enjoyed doing things together during their leisure time, and also having conversations just to "let off steam," or to talk about problems and ask for advice. The adolescents frequently emphasized that their same-age friends understood them better than their parents.

The second function of friendship consisted in "support and assistance." While in the first function, "socializing and interrelating," the focus was on everyday meetings of friends, here the aspect of help in emergency or crisis situations stood in the foreground. It was a matter of practical things: having a friend to help one in emergencies and give advice in difficult situations, whereby both psychological support and actual aid were mentioned. This function of friendship was likewise considered important by all of the persons interviewed.

While the first two functions related to coping with everyday life, the third function, "self-realization," emphasized the individual personality. Here the point was that friendship created an intimate sphere in which personal feelings, thoughts and problems could be revealed without fear of social sanctions or loss of prestige. On the one hand, this provided leeway for people to be themselves and express their personal idiosyncracies to someone else (being able to be oneself, representation and stabilization of personal identity). On the other hand, they received learning impulses and suggestions that could further self-recognition and personal development from their friends. Another aspect of self-realization, in the sense of Wright's "comfort value," was the mention of the security and support provided by friendship.

According to Selman, this function of friendship could not be expected to appear until stage 4, at an adult age. So it was not surprising to find that the adolescents in our sample seldom mentioned this aspect. Although the exchange of intimate thoughts, feelings and concerns was important to them (according to Selman, a key criterion of stage 3), they attributed a primarily psychohygienic function to this exchange ("getting everything off one's chest"). For instance, one 18-year-old said, "It's important to have a friend, because you can't just always keep swallowing everything," and a 17-year-old explained, "It's like you go through a lot of things every day, and you just have to tell somebody about it. Otherwise you might just explode sometimes."

With regard to the functions of friendship, east/west and gender differences became apparent. East Berlin males, both adult and adolescent, more frequently emphasized the purely social character of their friendly relations and the importance of common undertakings (leisure activities, going out to pubs or discotheques, sports). The East Berlin adolescents almost invariably mentioned meeting their friends in youth clubs and the discos there – places of a kind which sadly have largely been closed in recent years due to budgetary cuts. West Berliners (and primarily females) placed more emphasis on the role of conversations in friendship, and also underscored the greater intimacy of this exchange. With regard to the function of support and assistance, our findings indicated that emotional support in friendship was more important to the West Berliners and female persons in our sample than to the East Berliners and male persons. For East Berliners, practical aid held first priority. Adolescents from the eastern part of the city, especially males, mentioned the following situations: assistance in fights and physical attacks, help in repairing things, washing dishes (!), and doing homework. Adult East Berliners referred to friends' practical aid in view of shortages of services or time, or a limited availability of commodities (help with repairs, taking care of children, doing errands, lending money).

The function of self-realization was mentioned primarily by West Berlin adults, the majority of them female. Significantly more West Berliners spoke of the opportunity to be oneself in the context of a friendly relationship, and of the importance of presenting oneself as one is. They mentioned the fact of being able to drop their mask, facade or role with friends, using precisely this sociological jargon in their replies. With respect to the opportunity to receive learning impulses and stimuli to self-recognition from a friend, leading to further development and personal growth, the frequency of West Berliners' replies was also significantly higher: "You can learn a lot about yourself," "I need reflection," "my friend can put me on the right track." The fact that friends can mutually provide a feeling of security and support was mentioned by West Berliners almost exclusively ("My friend gives me security and a safe feeling," said one adolescent). Our findings on the function of self-realization conformed to Tenbruck's hypothesis that a type

of relationship in which importance is attached to the unique idiosyncracies of individuals or personalities is to be found more frequently in Western societies.

Key Concepts in Friendship: Openness, Trust, Politeness

To put it simply, the east/west differences observed with respect to the functions of friendship can be described as social and practical assistance versus self-realization. This was also reflected in the key demands made on friends, for while the East Berliners expected honesty and openness above all, the West Berliners expected openness. As a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the term "openness" revealed, a difference in semantic use was present here. For the West Berliners, openness implied being real and authentic, in the sense of providing mutual access to feelings, admitting anxieties and doubts, and not hiding behind conventions. The East Berliners used the word "openness" essentially as a synonym for honesty and a frank expression of opinions. These two connotations plausibly point to differing attitudes with regard to the functions of friendship. The same holds for the replies to the question, "What does trust in friendship mean to you?" On the whole, the interviewees referred to a great variety of aspects of the meaning of trust, which could be summed up in four categories:

- (1) Being able to confide in a friend, reveal private thoughts, and/or have the certainty of being accepted and liked by him or her;
- (2) being safe from hurt feelings, betrayal, exploitation;
- (3) believing in a friend's reliability and trustworthiness. This included the aspects of keeping one's word and being able to entrust a friend with valuable property.
- (4) being able to count on a friend's reticence and discretion.

The majority of the adolescents' mentions related to the category of discretion ("Trust is a mutual thing. I mean he can confide something in me without worrying that I'll tell the world," said one teenager). For them, trust means the certainty that a friend will not pass on the problems or secrets one has confided to him or her rather than telling them to everyone, especially to parents. When we consider that adolescents of this age are in the process of withdrawing from parental orientation and forming a personal identity, they understandably expect a friend to be a reliable partner in whom they can confide their problems and concerns without fearing an indiscretion that would make these public. In other respects, the same east/west differences appeared in the adolescent group which were significant among the adults. For the East Berliners, trust in friendship meant above all reliability in word and deed, that a friend would honor agreements and commitments, that what they said could be believed, and that they could be relied upon. It also implied that a friend could be entrusted with some valuable or important object. The East Berliners in our sample made especially frequent mention of the fact that they would trust a friend with the

key to their apartment ("Trust means that I can leave town and give my apartment key to my girlfriend – everything relating to personal property"). Persons, too, sometimes came under the heading of "property" ("It's that blind faith when I leave my children with him and know nothing will happen to them." Or, "Trust is knowing my friend won't steal my girlfriend").

A significant east/west difference was also found with respect to the aspect of mutual trust and entrusting secrets or intimate personal matters to a friend. The West Berliners spoke more frequently of trust as being able to "reveal all of one's personal behavior and thinking to a friend." This in turn indicated the greater degree of intimacy they associated with the concept of friendship. Their mutual trust was based on the certainty of being accepted by the other as a person, even when one had admitted to having weak points or making mistakes. Another aspect of trust mentioned by our interviewees related to "not expecting anything bad" from a friend. Here, too, many more West Berliners than East Berliners mentioned this aspect, saying trust was the certainty that a friend would not use or exploit one. One woman stated, "Trust is a very deep certainty of knowing that friends would not hurt you on purpose." In a similar vein, one West Berlin man said, "Trust is also being convinced that the other person won't cheat you." When the male West Berliners made statements along these lines, they sometimes used aggressive, graphic language (emphasizing that a friend would not "do them dirty," "hit below the belt," "double cross," or "screw them" [These terms are only rough equivalents of the German idioms. Translator's note]) or employed terms from the business world, saying a friend would not think of deriving any advantage, profiting from or capitalizing on the information confided in them. We might tentatively conclude that these notions concealed a great mistrust with respect to other males, as well as a fear that they might turn intimacies or confessions to their own advantage. We can only speculate whether such statements reflect actual career experiences and the risks faced in a capitalist world (*homo homini lupus*), or whether they might represent projections of the interviewees' own aggression potential.

In sum, the east/west comparison revealed that trust in friendship was viewed in different contexts of meaning. Among the West Berliners, the revelation of intimate thoughts and the vulnerability this entailed, combined with the certainty that a friend would not voluntarily do them harm, stood in the foreground. The East Berliners mentioned trust more frequently in the context of actual behavior, such as a friend's reliability in word and deed, their dependability and predictability.

With respect to manners – covered by the interview in terms of politeness in friendship – east/west differences likewise came to light. The replies to the question, "Do you think politeness is important between friends?" revealed three attitudes towards politeness which related to differing definitions of the term:

- (1) An unqualified advocacy of polite behavior. The persons in our sample who expressed themselves in these terms had a comprehensive and positive conception of politeness which, on the one hand, implied respect and esteem and, on the other, reflected such prosocial attitudes as consideration, sensibility, tact and attentiveness towards others. Politeness was something that should be maintained at all times, both with respect to friends and strangers.
- (2) A differentiated definition of politeness. The interviewees who fell into this category distinguished between various forms of politeness and their contexts and addressees. They drew a line between formal politeness in the sense of following the rules of etiquette and the substance of politeness as an expression of an inward attitude towards others based on respect and esteem. To them, the mere keeping up of appearances, conventional politeness, seemed appropriate only when dealing with strangers, but not with friends, who deserved to be treated with respect, tact, and consideration.
- (3) An express rejection of politeness. Those in this final group considered politeness to be devoid of positive aspects, and emphasized only the negative aspects of behavior they thought purely formal. Also, they rejected politeness between friends, defining it generally as a result of social pressure and a postulate of role-playing behavior which led to a suppression or concealment of one's true personality. (When you behave politely, "you have to hide your personality"; it is like "doing violence to yourself to force yourself to be friendly even if you aren't feeling it.")

On the whole, a clear majority of the East Berliners in our sample, both adults and adolescents, advocated an unqualified practice of politeness. The West Berliners most frequently held a qualified conception of politeness or rejected it outright. It was only West Berliners who referred to the compulsory nature of polite behavior, insisting on their right to personal expression and self-determination. For them, individuality and authenticity held first priority, and being polite only hindered the full unfolding of their personality. In contrast, the East Berliners, former residents of the "Workers' and Farmers' State," favored politeness in the sense of observing the rules of social behavior – an etiquette originally established at court, by the nobility, which then became the standard of bourgeois civil society. This definitely reflected the aims of the GDR educational institutions, which placed extremely great store in politeness, mutual respect, esteem and considerateness.

Conflict and Quarrels in Friendship

In this context, various questions were asked which related to the occurrence and types of conflict between friends, the reasons behind disagreements or disputes, the ways of coping with conflict, and the meaning of conflict in friendship.

In view of the east/west differences in attitude to politeness between friends, it was not surprising to find clear differences as regards conflict as well. These differences could be traced, firstly, to differences in the definition of the term. Many East Berliners held a very general definition of conflict which extended even to the expression of differing opinions. This may possibly reflect the circumstance that, in the GDR, opinions that deviated from the norm could be dangerous. Heated, aggressive quarreling was viewed negatively by East Berliners across the board. For most of the West Berliners, in contrast, such a dispute, if reasonably conducted, did not amount to a fight but represented a normal form of conflict-solving, and many of them considered excited, heated argument a positive occurrence and the ability to quarrel an important social competence. (One man complained of his inability to quarrel, saying it was "a problem I have, not liking scenes"; and one woman said, "Arguing is something we haven't learned to do nearly enough, and we really should do it more often because it's a frank relationship... and then you can embrace each other after it's all come out.")

Based on the interviewees' replies with respect to their behavior in conflict situations and their approach to conflict-solving, they were categorized in terms of four types:

Conflict Type 0: *Non-disputers*, a category into which one-fourth of our sample fell.

Although they admitted to having disagreements with friends, they did not consider these to represent conflict.

Conflict Type I: *Restrained disputers*. Although their behavior was similar to that of the non-disputers, they took a different view of it. Some described themselves as non-disputers because they were able to cope in a reasonable way with conflicts and disagreements among friends; others described themselves as "disputers" because they had a very broad definition of conflict, which included a restrained arguing out of differences of opinion ("Dispute is basically only an exchange of different opinions").

As regards the conflict behavior of Types 0 and I, it should be added that many of these persons mentioned that they had heated disputes outside their friendships as well. The majority admitted unasked that they were capable of loud and heated verbal altercation with family members and especially with their spouses ("The person I can still have the best fights with is my daughter, that works fine; but of course she can't be described as a friend").

Conflict Type II: *Moderate disputers*, who reported having agitated verbal exchanges, even raising their voices or shouting at the other person while nevertheless observing certain bounds of behavior.

Conflict Type III: *Violent, aggressive disputers*, who were capable, figuratively speaking, of going at the other person's throat, hurting their feelings, overstepping the bounds of personal consideration.

With regard to these four conflict types, clear east/west and the expected gender differences came to light. East Berliners, adults and adolescents alike, tended to belong more frequently to Conflict Type I, the restrained disputers (above all males), or to Type II, the moderate disputers (females). It was West Berliners almost exclusively who fell into the Conflict Type III category, the aggressive, injurious disputers. As expected, the West and East Berliners had differing attitudes towards the general meaning of conflict for friendship. While the East Berliners rejected loud, aggressive disputes and considered them a danger to friendship, the West Berliners emphasized the positive aspects of conflict, saying that quarrels and disputes could be a learning experience, leading to new points of view, understanding for the other person, and also insights into their own personality. Conflicts and disputes, they said, could be a safety valve, a way of airing normally unspoken things or abreacting repressed emotions. An acceptance of conflict situations would serve to strengthen friendship ("Without conflict it's entirely impossible to reach a deeper level") or lend it vitality ("Conflict as the salt in the soup"). In this group, quarreling was also considered a proof of friendship, because it signalled interest in the other person, while an avoidance of conflict indicated indifference to them. The majority of East Berliners in our sample likewise saw the positive aspects of conflict, although they related these almost without exception to the level of debate. In a good dialectical manner they referred to the learning effects of such exchanges of opinions and contradictions, emphasizing that these could help one "question one's own position and think about other things for once," "doubt oneself, and maybe advance a step farther," or "develop tolerance."

When we viewed these findings in the context of our question regarding the emotionalization and heightened intimacy of friendly relations, the following conclusions could be drawn: Conflict Type I was characterized by a low degree of emotional and intimacy factors, and Conflict Type III by a high degree. In other words, the distribution of these types among East and West Berliners (Conflict Type I: 23 East versus 11 West Berliners; Conflict Type III: 5 East versus 17 West Berliners) could be interpreted as confirming Tenbruck's hypothesis.

Friendship and Love

Towards the end of the interview we asked the following questions: "Do you draw any distinction between friendship and love, or between infatuation and love? What does faithfulness mean to you?"

As we know from the abundant literature concerning love (literary works, but also recent empirical studies from the American linguistic sphere), even people within a shared cultural context can hold extremely diverse ideas about love. These range from love as a passionate, romantic affair to ideas that focus more strongly on emotional ties and

togetherness (Lee 1988, Bierhoff et al. 1993, Weiss 1995). In the present study, the various conceptions of love expressed by our sample could be characterized (in analogy to Sternberg 1986 and Davis 1988) largely in terms of three dimensions:

- intimacy, trust and understanding
- sexuality, passion and feelings of togetherness
- obligations, mutual ties and commitments (concerning the considerable gender differences observed among the adults in this regard, see Valtin/Fatke 1997).

A preliminary note regarding the adolescents is in order. Most of those in our sample emphasized that since they had yet to meet their true love, they could not speak from personal experience ("I haven't had to *get over* a really deep love yet," one teenage girl stated not once but twice, as if this were some childhood illness to which one had to develop immunity). Others, such as one 17-year-old girl, said they didn't "really know exactly what love means," then added, "I assume you would notice if you were in love. I blush and my heart beats faster when I see him, but whether this is supposed to be love or not, I don't know." By comparison to the adults, the adolescents placed stronger emphasis on sexuality, the physical relationship, and the concomitant intense, deep and "wonderful" feelings. They spoke less frequently about the intimacy and trust of a relationship, and as good as not at all about the aspect of "obligation, mutual ties and commitment," which was not surprising in view of their limited experience in this regard. With respect to the concepts of love and friendship, the adolescents tended to exhibit the same east/west differences that came very strongly to the fore among the adults. The East Berliners considered these forms of relationship to be very different in nature, and characterized love as a relationship involving greater emotionality, intimacy and trust (this latter trait mentioned primarily by adults). To give the typical example of an East Berlin man: "When I say I have a friendship with a colleague, this is just a feeling of respect, solidarity, helpfulness, understanding, helping each other; but I would really see this as different from love relationships.... Love is a certain deep rootedness, and also a question of one's own personality, a feeling of contentment, a reservoir to withdraw into for things, so to speak. It goes deeper."

Other distinctions from friendship were drawn with respect to the intensity of feelings involved, and/or to eroticism or sexuality: "Love involves a special feeling of happiness," or "love is more euphoric, involves more excitement." The more rational basis of friendship was also emphasized in the following two statements by adult females: "Love is an erotic relationship. In friendship, the head is more involved"; and "Friendship is not as strongly emotionally determined." Differences in the degree of intimacy were also mentioned: "Then, too, in a friendly relationship there are borderlines, the fact that a person creates demarcation lines around them, and you don't go beyond them, or maybe don't want to, because you don't get to know the other person so intimately."

West Berliners were more frequently convinced than East Berliners that no fundamental difference existed between friendship and love. Either they referred to the great similarity between the two types of relationship or defined love as a relationship whose most important component was friendship. The majority of the West Berliners made statements to the effect that love was friendship plus some further element, most frequently sexuality or eroticism ("Love is friendship with heart palpitations," one male adult said, and a male adolescent stated, "Love is friendship with longing"). Another typical reply came from a man, who said, "I think that ideally a love relationship is not only an erotic or sexual relationship but, beyond that, should include best friendship. On the other hand, a best friendship would be everything a love relationship also has, except maybe for this erotic or sexual aspect, although I do think this embracing and tactility, or this being able to let oneself go, in a physical respect, naturally ought to be a part of it as well, but just not with the same intensity as is the case in a love relationship."

The majority of the West Berliners characterized friendship in the same terms as East Berliners characterized love. For the former, that is, the love relationship bore a great similarity to friendship, to which a high emotional value was attributed. That friendship gave them a sense of security, comfort and support was emphasized, as mentioned, primarily by West Berliners, whereas several East Berliners stated that love meant safety and security to them: "You feel secure, and you can give her [one's partner] security, too." As regards the value placed on these two modes of social relationship, on the whole more East Berliners than West Berliners valued love above friendship. These results underscored the often-described family orientation of persons from the GDR (Nickel 1992, Gysi/Meyer 1993). For some West Berliners (especially women), friendship held a place of prominence in their lives. An exemplary statement: "Also, in a friendship I can pursue and fulfil a lot more interests that concern me, I think. You can fulfill yourself much better than on the basis of a love relationship."

Our interview findings showed hardly any indication of the existence of romantic ideas of love. At the most, strongly idealized conceptions of love were found among a very few male adults from East Berlin, and with regard to conceptions of infatuation, the replies of the majority contained elements of love as passion (Luhmann 1982), namely the loss of a sense of reality, a sensory intoxication, and a limitation of rational thinking. For one man – let us call him Th. – a lifelong passion was a crucial component of his conception of love. Unlike almost all the others interviewed, Th. made no distinction between love and infatuation, remarking, "For me, infatuation also includes the idea of going with a woman – to the end of the world. Not through every bed, not necessarily through every bed, but to the end of the world. And this is basically what the central meaning consists in for me. So when that feeling creeps over you – My God, are you going to be able to spend your last twenty years with her, too? – or you wait until another storm has blown over and sleep

brotherhood (!) again – that's just not enough. There's something missing." Recently -- that is, several years after German reunification -- Bierhoff et al. (1998) found in a questionnaire study of East Germans that they described themselves as relatively romantic. In our study, this was true only of the men. The women described the state of infatuation in considerably more sober terms. Sociologists have pointed out that women, by comparison to men, could ill afford building a partnership or marital relationship on blind infatuation. Since their status as womanfriend or wife was still determined by that of the man or husband, they had more reason "to consider collateral factors relating to whom they were going to embark with on the excursion into the land of romance" (Luhmann 1982, p. 191, translated by Gabriel).

In view of the high value placed by the East Berliners on love and/or partnership relationships, it was not surprising to find east/west differences with respect to the concept of fidelity or faithfulness. On the whole, the interviewees associated six differing conceptions with the word "fidelity", which extended from sexual fidelity as the strict principle of a relationship limited to a couple, to the denial of fidelity as being an obligation. For the adolescents in our sample sexual fidelity had a quite high value. The adults viewed it in more qualified terms. The East Berliners tended to hold narrow, strict, and also "serial" conceptions of fidelity which were valid only as long as the love relationship lasted. A few East Berlin males even mentioned unfaithful thoughts ("A mental infidelity can really be just as bad. It's just harder to detect"). The West Berliners, in contrast, tended to hold a more liberal idea of fidelity, some even rejecting it outright (One man stated, "Fidelity is not taking advantage of a great opportunity to do something with another woman").

Types of Friendship

Based on the interview data gathered in the study, we were able to distinguish three types of friendship, each of which emphasized a different function of friendly relations.

Type I, emphasizing the function of *sociability and amusement*. This category included the easily satisfied person contented largely with his or her own company (and having only one or two friends) and the easily satisfied, sociable person (having a circle of friends of both sexes). Socializing in common leisure activities and also help and practical support in difficult situations were especially important to these persons. A good friend was characterized by honesty, politeness and reliability; or, as Christian, 17, pointed out, "Just good feelings – sticking together, honesty, and doing things together." A few persons of this type emphasized that they would not, or not absolutely, trust their friend or tell them all their personal feelings. Their ideal friend would be someone with similar interests, opinions and attitudes; that is, someone with whom they got along well and had little reason to quarrel. The persons of this friendship type belonged to the conflict type of non-

disputers or calm, restrained disputers. This type was found primarily among the East Berlin adult males and among many male adolescents.

Type II, with emphasis on the function of *social support*, in which importance was placed on conversation, moral support and trust. In our sample this type was found principally among the female adolescents as well as among the East Berlin adult women. Trusting and confident talks, moral support, but also friends' criticism, were the key values of friendship for this group. These persons belonged primarily to the conflict type of moderate disputers.

Type III, emphasizing the function of *self-realization*. The persons in this group placed high expectations in emotionality and intimacy in friendship. This type occurred only among West Berlin adults, and among those who, as a rule, had close friendships with only a few others of the same sex. Their conception of friendship might be defined as a close emotional relationship between two persons of the same gender in which commitment, obligation, openness, self-revelation, emotional compassion, learning and further development played a role. However, this type also evinced negative aspects, such as an egotistical self-realization which might take place at the friend's expense. This included a rejection of the social pressure of ritual good manners and politeness, accompanied by an insistence on the right to express one's feelings, an acceptance of extreme or aggressive forms of conflict despite the risk of hurting the other person's feelings, and a rejection of the obligation to fidelity. Statements that could be interpreted as revealing this sort of egotistical orientation were found almost exclusively among the West Berliners, whereas the East Berliners tended to emphasize the importance of respecting borderlines and maintaining detachment.

Conclusions

With respect to the function of friendship and to key conceptions of interpersonal relationships, considerable differences were found between East and West Berliners shortly after reunification. These related to concepts such as trust, politeness, honesty/openness, fidelity and conflict. On the whole, these results conformed with the sociological hypothesis that friendship relationships are linked with the structure of society. In a rigidly structured society like the GDR with its restrictive social and political conditions, different functions and qualities were associated with friendship than in the West. Friendships were not personalized to any great degree, but rather were oriented towards tangible mutual obligations such as reliability, honesty, politeness, solidarity, support and helpfulness, especially in practical matters. In a highly differentiated society like the FRG, in contrast, people had a greater need for personalization in friendly relations, which were characterized by high demands placed on emotionality and intimacy. Furthermore, differences also became evident with respect to the understanding of and value placed on friendship as against love. The results of Bierhoff et al. (1998) regarding love and partnership in East and West Germany, although reached several years after

reunification, are compatible with the findings discussed here: The East Germans exhibited a higher degree of satisfaction and stability in their partner relationships and described themselves as more romantic and altruistic.

Traditional value orientations and conceptions of life can be expected to change only very slowly. As this implies, the differences observed in the present study with regard to key aspects of interpersonal relationships will likely continue to exist for some time, and influence or prejudice social relationships between persons from East and West Germany. With the progressive individualization and pluralization of biographical forms, however, it can be expected that over the long run East Germans, too, will begin to attach more importance to friendships for self-realization and to secure and confirm their individuality, and that for them, too – as is already the case with West Germans – friends will become a sort of new family.

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